

RICH, EDGAR J.

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Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

Edgar J. Rich

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THE LINCOLN GROUP OF BOSTON

LINCOLN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CIVIL WAR

A Paper Read by Edgar J. Rich
At the Meeting of the Group,
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In the course of some studies of the Civil War, especially of the Southern military leaders and the battles, I was able to get the point of view of the South, and came to an understanding of why a people, absolutely loyal to our united country, treasured the memories of that fratricidal conflict which, if they had won, would have disrupted our country and would have perpetuated human slavery, or at least would have postponed its abolition. The people of the South do not mourn for a Lost Cause, but they hold in almost religious fervor the memories of the high character and marvellous skill of their military leaders, the gallantry of their starved and ragged soldiers and the undying self-sacrifice of their women.

But I found that few of them were willing to see the point of view of the North, and understanding and harmony can only come through each seeing the point of view of the other. Their ideas of Lincoln, the embodiment of Northern sentiment, were distorted and often false. This was especially true of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, a most active organization in keeping alive the memories of the conflict. It seemed to me therefore that it was time for the South to have a true view of Lincoln in his relations to the South. I approached the subject I hope with entire frankness.

It is not difficult to show his uniform expressions of kindness towards the Southern people, and his understanding of their difficult problem. At the last Douglas debate he said, "As I have not felt, so I have not expressed any harsh sentiment towards our Southern brethren. I have constantly declared, as I have really believed, the only difference between them and us is

the difference of circumstances."

And again at an earlier time he said,

"When the Southern people tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery than we are, I acknowledge the fact. When it is said that the institution exists and that it is very difficult to get rid of it in any satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the saying. I surely will not blame them for not doing what I should not know how to do myself."

Then, in that remarkable message to Congress, December 1, 1862, following the preliminary emancipation proclamation, he advocated a resolution to amend the constitution, providing for gradual emancipation extending over a period of thirty-seven years, with compensation to the slave owners. On the question of compensation he said,

"It is no less true for having been often said, that the people of the South are no more responsible for the original introduction of their property than are the people of the North; and when it is remembered how unhesitatingly we all use cotton and sugar and share the profits of dealing in them, it may not be quite safe to say that the South has been more responsible than the North for its continuance. If, then, for a common object their property is to be sacrificed, is it not just that it be done at a common charge?"

In July 1864 Lincoln authorized James R. Gilmore to go to Jefferson Davis and to convey to him informally the terms of peace which included the payment of \$400,000,000 for compensation for the loss of slave property.

Upon his return from the Hampton Roads Conference in February 1865, when the end of the conflict was near, he submitted to his cabinet the draft of a message recommending the appropriation of \$400,000,000 for compensation, provided the war ceased by April 1, 1865.

It is therefore not difficult to show to the Southern people his kindly feelings towards them.

But in various publications in the South and in conversations with many Southerners I found a variety of charges and criticism, some obviously based on ignorance or bitter hostility, others made by fair-minded men, which should receive candid treatment. The criticisms may be grouped as follows:

1. That he had been a rum seller; was continually telling ribald stories; his mother was illegitimate and perhaps he was; was uncouth and in fact no gentleman.
2. That he was an infidel and a scoffer at religion, that at best he was, anathema to this day to many Southern people, a Unitarian!
3. That he conducted war with brutality, contrary to the laws of civilized warfare, as witness Sherman's march to the sea, and Sheridan's ravaging of the Valley of Virginia, contrasting these with Lee's invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania.
4. That the Emancipation Proclamation freed not a single slave and was issued for the purpose of inciting a servile insurrection.

5. That he was an abolitionist and elected to abolish slavery by force.
6. That he was directly responsible for the war because he was adamant against any compromise and in particular was responsible for the defeat of the Crittenden Compromise.

My paper this afternoon deals only with the last.

Who was John J. Crittenden and what was his Compromise?

John J. Crittenden in 1860 was 73 years of age. He had been Governor of Kentucky, Attorney General in the cabinets of two presidents, and at this time was in the Senate. He was a man of lofty character and disinterested patriotism. He had a passionate love of the Union. He had been a Whig and a friend of Henry Clay. He had been frequently mentioned for the presidency.

By way of parenthesis, I would add that it is well known that Crittenden favored the election of Douglas for Senator from Illinois in 1858 as against Lincoln; that he did not vote for Lincoln in the election of 1860, and that of course he believed Lincoln entirely wrong in his attitude towards his Compromise. Nevertheless, in April 1862, he made this statement in the Senate:

"I voted against Mr. Lincoln, and opposed him honestly and sincerely, but Mr. Lincoln has won me to his side. There is a niche in the temple of fame, a niche near to Washington, which should be occupied by the statue of him who shall save his country. Mr. Lincoln has a mighty destiny! It is for him, if he will, to step into that niche; it is for him to be but a president of the people of the United States, and there will be his statue. It is in his power to occupy a place next to Washington,-- the founder and preserver side by side!"

After Lincoln's election Crittenden saw only too clearly that the country was rapidly drifting towards dissolution. On December 18, 1860, he introduced in the Senate resolutions which embodied the famous Crittenden Compromise. These proposals were to be submitted as amendments to the Constitution, and, it was hoped, would afford a permanent solution of the slavery question. They covered all important points of controversy between the North and the South, as follows:

- Article 1. In all territory of the United States, "now held, or hereafter acquired," situated north of latitude 36° 30' (the old Missouri Compromise line) slavery was to be prohibited; "in all territory south of said line of latitude slavery is hereby recognized as existing, and shall not be interfered with by Congress."
- Article 2. "Congress shall have no power to abolish slavery in places under its exclusive jurisdiction, and situated within the limits of States that permit the holding of slaves."
- Article 3. "Congress shall have no power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia without compensation, and without the consent of its inhabitants, of Virginia and of Maryland."
- Article 4. "Congress shall have no power to prohibit or hinder the transportation of slaves between slave-holding States and territories."
- Article 5. This article was intended to remove, in part, the fierce controversy over the Fugitive Slave Law, and provided that the United States should pay for rescued fugitive slaves.
- Article 6. "No future amendment of the Constitution shall affect the five preceding articles . . . and no amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to congress any power to abolish or interfere with slaves in any of the States by whose laws it is or may be allowed or permitted."

The compromise also provided for certain laws to be enacted by Congress, modifying certain features of the Fugitive Slave Law and earnestly recommending to the States the repeal of the so-called Personal Liberty Laws which were enacted to hinder the operation of the Fugitive Slave law.

These resolutions were referred by the Senate to a Special Committee of Thirteen. It is important to note the composition of this Committee. Its members were the ablest and best known Senators, representing fairly the Republicans, Democrats and Unionists, and distributed between the North, South and the Border States.*

When the Committee met it was voted that no measure should be reported unless it had the support of a majority of the five Republicans, and a majority of the eight others (Democrats and Unionists).

*These were the members of the Committee of Thirteen,

From the South:

Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi	Democrat
Robert Toombs, of Georgia	Democrat

From the Border Slave States:

John F. Crittenden, of Kentucky	Unionist
Lazarus W. Powell, of Kentucky	Unionist
R.T.M. Hunter, of Virginia	Democrat

From the North:

Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois	Democrat
William Bigler, of Pennsylvania	Democrat
Henry M. Rice, of Minnesota	Democrat
William H. Seward, of New York	Republican
Jacob Collamer, of Vermont	Republican
Benjamin F. Wade, of Ohio	Republican
James R. Doolittle, of Wisconsin	Republican
James A. Grimes, of Iowa	Republican

The first article, providing an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting slavery north of latitude 36° 30' and recognizing it south of it, was the real basis of the Compromise, and the fate of the Compromise as a whole depended upon the fate of this article. It should be observed that this article involved a concession by the South, assuming the dictum in the Dred Scott decision would eventually become a law and that all the territories would be open to slavery. The Republicans would simply yield the hope that sometime this dictum might not be followed. The article was voted for only by the Northern Democrats and the Border State Unionists all the Republicans and the two Democrats from lower Southern States, Davis and Toombs, voting against it, six to seven.*

The discussion continued for weeks, but there was no change in the vote. The Senate was flooded with petitions, mostly from the North, urging the adoption of the Compromise.** One important fact must be noted as bearing upon Lincoln's responsibility for its rejection. Thurlow Weed, the most influential of all Republican politicians, and ranking with Seward and Lincoln in influence in party councils, published in his newspaper, the Albany Evening Journal, on November 30, 1860, before Senator Crittenden introduced his resolutions, a plan of compromise which contained this essential article of territorial division. He proposed that the Missouri Compromise line be extended to the Eastern boundary of California.

*Note that there was a majority of the Democrats and Unionists who voted for it.

**Among them was one signed by 22,213 citizens of 182 towns and cities of Massachusetts

What was Lincoln's attitude towards the compromise measures? He was president-elect and the acknowledged leader of his party. The situation was desperately critical. South Carolina seceded on December 19, 1860. It was well known that the cotton states were preparing to follow. Lincoln was in touch with the situation. He had a long conference with Thurlow Weed in December. We do not know what pressure was brought to bear upon Lincoln to throw his influence in favor of the compromise. But it seems reasonably clear that had he done so he would have had the support of Weed and of Seward and of the mass of Northern people. Instead of doing this he actually exerted his influence against any compromise on the territorial question.

On December 11, 1860, he wrote to William Kellogg, a member of Congress, as follows:

"Entertain no proposition for a compromise in regard to the extension of slavery. The instant you do they have us under again; all our labor is lost, and sooner or later must be done over. Douglas is sure to be again trying to bring in his 'popular sovereignty.' Have none of it. The tug has to come, and better now than later. You know I think the fugitive-slave clause of the Constitution ought to be enforced--to put it in its mildest form, ought not to be resisted."

On December 13, 1860, he wrote to E. B. Washburne, an old friend and member of Congress, as follows:

"Prevent, as far as possible, any of our friends from demoralizing themselves and our cause by entertaining propositions for compromise of any sort on 'slavery extension.' There is no possible compromise upon it but which puts us under again, and leaves all our work to do over again. Whether it be a Missouri line or Eli Thayer's popular sovereignty, it is all the same. Let either be done, and immediately filibustering and extending slavery recommences. On that point hold firm, as with a chain of steel."

Again, on December 15, 1860, he wrote to similar effect to John A. Gilmer, of North Carolina, to whom he later offered a place in the cabinet.

"On the territorial question I am inflexible, as you can see my position in the book. On that there is a difference between you and us; and it is the only substantial difference. You think slavery is right and ought to be extended; we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. For this neither has any just occasion to be angry with the other."

On December 17, 1860, Lincoln wrote Thurlow Weed,

"Should the convocation of governors of which you speak seem desirous to know my views on the present aspect of things tell them you judge from my speeches that I will be inflexible on the territorial question; that I probably think either the Missouri line extended, or Douglas's and Eli Thayer's Popular Sovereignty, would lose us everything we gain by the election; that filibustering for all south of us and making slave states of it would follow, in spite of us, in either case.

Then followed Weed's visit to Lincoln, to which I have referred. On December 26, Seward wrote Lincoln stating that Weed had told him about this visit.* He goes on to say that he, as a member of the Committee of Thirteen, offered to the Committee his (Lincoln's) suggestions,

First, that the Constitution should be amended so that Congress could never abolish or interfere with slavery in the States. This the Committee accepted.

Second, that the fugitive slave law should be amended so as to give a jury trial to the fugitive. This was rejected.

Third, that Congress recommend to the States the repeal of all laws which contravened the Constitution. This was rejected.

*Nicolay & Hay, Vol. III p. 262

In this same letter Seward writes that he does not see the slightest indication of the adoption of the Crittenden Compromise by the Republican side of Congress.

He adds,

"The United States of America, their Constitution, their capital, their organization in all its departments, and with all its military and naval forces, will stand and pass without resistance into your hands. There will be several, perhaps all, of the slave states standing in a contumacious attitude on the 4th of March. Sedition will be growing weaker and loyalty stronger every day from the acts of secession as they occur."

Apparently Lincoln's attitude against yielding on the territorial question was so firm that no determined attempt was made by Weed or anybody else to change his views.

James F. Rhodes in his History of the United States has carefully weighed the responsibility squarely upon the Republicans.**He expresses the opinion that if a majority of the Republicans had accepted it, even Jefferson Davis and Robert Toombs, who voted against it, would have fallen in line. This is a vital point. Is Rhodes right?

On January 7, 1861, Senator Toombs, of Georgia, said in the Senate:

"When it was proposed, as I understand the Senator from Kentucky now proposes, that the line of 36° 30' shall be extended, acknowledging and protecting our property on the South side of that line, for the sake of peace - permanent peace - I said to the Committee of Thirteen, and I say here, that with other satisfactory provisions, I would accept it."

54 Congressional Globe 270
Stephens' War Between the States, p. 120

**Vol. III pp. 149 et seq.

I am unable to find any statement by Jefferson Davis of similar effect to that by Toombs.

But on January 3, 1861, Senator Douglas said in the Senate,

"In the committee of thirteen, a few days ago, every member from the South, including those from the cotton states (Davis and Toombs), expressed their readiness to accept the proposition of my venerable friend from Kentucky (Crittenden) as a final settlement of the controversy, if tendered and sustained by the Republican members."

And on March 2, 1861, Senator Douglas made this further statement:

"I can confirm the Senator's declaration that Senator Davis himself, when on the committee of thirteen, was ready, at all times, to compromise on the Crittenden proposition. I will go further and say that Mr. Toombs was also."

Rhodes places the responsibility squarely upon Lincoln, who, if he had thrown his weight in favor of the Compromise could have prevailed upon the Republican members of the Committee to accept it.

His conclusions are thus expressed:

"It is a fair historic probability that Seward would have favored in committee a compromise on the basis of the Crittenden plan, had he not already in a measure submitted himself to the leadership of Lincoln by entertaining the offer of the State Department. It is certain that if Lincoln, in the interview with Weed had given his adhesion to the Albany Journal proposition, Seward would have championed it in committee and in Congress; and it seems almost certain that, with such support, the Crittenden Compromise in essence would have been reported by the Committee and adopted by Congress."

Mr. Rhodes' final conclusion is (Vol. III, p. 154):

"No fact is clearer than that the Republicans in December defeated the Crittenden Compromise; few historic probabilities have better evidence to support them than the one which asserts that the adoption of this measure would have prevented the secession of the cotton states other than South Carolina, and the beginning of the civil war in 1861."

Lord Charnwood, in his great biography of Lincoln, goes a long way towards sustaining Rhodes' view. He says (p. 194):

"Lincoln, however, did wreck it (the Compromise) at a time when it seemed likely to succeed, and it is most probable that thereby he caused the Civil War. It cannot be definitely said that he definitely expected the Civil War."

Why then did Lincoln hold out so tenaciously against any amendment to the constitution which would restrict slavery to territory south of the line of the Compromise?

To answer this fully and satisfactorily it would be necessary to review at considerable detail Lincoln's speeches since the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854. Space does not permit this, but an attempt will be made to state his views as clearly and unequivocally expressed on more than one occasion.

In the first place, he believed that slavery was morally and politically a great wrong. "If anything is wrong then slavery is wrong," he once said.

For its existence the North was just as culpable as the South. Therefore he never attacked the Southern slaveholder. He had no animosity towards the South--on the contrary he had the utmost kindness towards its people.

The South had very definite rights under the Constitution. Every effort by Northern abolitionists to interfere by moral suasion or incendiary attempt was a moral and legal wrong.

The South, too, under the Constitution had the right to the return of runaway slaves. Congress therefore had the duty to enact proper Fugitive Slave laws, and it was wrong and unconstitutional for the Northern states to pass laws tending to nullify the Federal law.

But slavery must be restricted within the limits of the States wherein it existed lawfully. Thus restricted slavery would in the course of time gradually disappear through the operation of natural laws. There was a strong sentiment in many Southern States in favor of gradual emancipation with just compensation to the owners. They should be allowed to work out their difficult problem without officious and dangerous intermeddling from the North.

But if allowed to spread out into the territories it would grow like a cancer. The United States would be embroiled with other nations. Already our relations with Spain were strained over Cuba, which we were insistently offering to buy and which we were suspected of working to seize by fair means or foul. Within a year Buchanan had asked for a secret fund of \$50,000,000, for the purpose of acquiring Cuba. It was openly charged that he desired this huge fund for the purpose of bribing Spanish officials.

Within the year, too, there had been a filibustering expedition to Nicaragua and when an army officer frustrated the attempt he was reprimanded by Buchanan for acting without orders. The South had long looked with eager eyes upon Mexico. If slavery became legalized south of latitude 36° 30', the compromise, instead of quieting the slavery issue, would give it added impetus.

We must therefore restrict it within the present lawful limits. To put the seal of constitutional approval upon its extension increases the aggressiveness of the slave dealer, who, rather than the owner, is responsible for the agitation which is disturbing the country: it will also increase the activities of the Abolitionists in interfering with the local institution of the South. How then can compromise on the territorial question settle the controversy? It will only continue it and eventually bring about the destruction of the Union.

These were Lincoln's reasons for his stand against the Crittenden Compromise. Who today will not say that he did not have a more far-seeing vision of the future and a sounder statesmanship than the splendid Crittenden and the many patriotic people, probably a majority in both sections of the country, who followed him?

As bearing upon Lincoln's emphatic opposition to the Crittenden Compromise, and perhaps as accounting for it, the difference should be noted between this proposed compromise and the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Under the latter Missouri was admitted as a slave state, with the proviso that slavery should not exist in all other territory north of 36° 30', the southern boundary line of Missouri. But there was no provision in reference to the territory south of that line. If Congress had the power to prohibit slavery in the territories it could make all the territory south free territory. It was generally assumed at that time that Congress had such power. But under the Crittenden Compromise, it was proposed to make by constitutional amendment all territory south of the line forever slave territory. Although I cannot find that

Lincoln referred to this distinction, he must have had it in mind and it can very well account for his inflexible opposition. The Crittenden Compromise further provided that no future amendment should affect it. The difference between the Missouri and the proposed Crittenden Compromise was clearly brought out in the debates in the Senate, especially by Senator Trumbull of Illinois, who stated that he would accept a compromise which was in substance the Missouri Compromise, but would not vote for the fixing of slavery in any territory for all time.* This does not go to the soundness of the conclusions of Charnwood and Rhodes that the Crittenden Compromise would have been adopted but for Lincoln's opposition, but it affords a reason for Lincoln's inflexibility, and an explanation of his fear, repeatedly expressed, that we would be continually embroiled with our Southern neighbors by the reckless acts of Southern slave traders to acquire new markets, and by Southern politicians to increase their power. Slavery, therefore, instead of gradually dying out, would spread like a cancer.

But would he accept war rather than yield on the territorial question? On October 16, 1854, at Peoria, Illinois, he said,

"Much as I hate slavery, I would consent to the extension of it rather than see the Union dissolved, just as I would consent to any great evil to avoid a greater one. But when I go to Union-saving, I must believe, at least, that the means I employ have some adaptation to the end."

* Congressional Globe 314 (Jan. 10, 1861)

If in 1860 Lincoln believed that war would follow the rejection of the Crittenden Compromise, would he still have insisted upon its rejection? It is unbelievable. If the obiter dictum of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case was destined later to become its decision, under which slavery would exist lawfully in all the territories, then, in so far as this vital part of the Compromise was concerned, the South would give up a constitutional though perhaps a barren right and the North would gain a new constitutional right, by the prohibition of slavery north of the line 36° 30'.

Under these circumstances is it conceivable that Lincoln would deliberately have plunged the country into the horrors of a fratricidal war rather than accept a compromise under which the North would receive more than those rights which it had under the existing constitution? The answer is, of course, No.

But Lincoln firmly believed that when the South understood his attitude, an attitude of sympathy and fairness towards it, as shown consistently in his speeches during the agitation of the past six years, and when it read and pondered his inaugural address, in which he would restate the views he had thus expressed, it would realize that it had nothing to fear from his administration--the South could rest secure in its constitutional rights.

On November 30, 1860, he wrote to Alexander H. Stevens congratulating him upon his eloquent appeal to the South to stay

in the Union. Among other things, he said,

"I fully appreciate the present peril the country is in, and the weight of responsibility on me. Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would, directly or indirectly, interfere with the slaves, or with them about the slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not an enemy, that there is no cause for such fears. The South would be in no more danger in this respect than it was in the days of Washington. I suppose, however, this does not meet the case. You think slavery is right and ought to be extended, while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. That, I suppose, is the rub. It certainly is the only substantial difference between us."

Perhaps the fullest statement of his views was his letter to John A. Gilmore, of North Carolina, written December 15, 1860:

"I am greatly disinclined to write a letter on the subject embraced in yours; and I would not do so, even privately as I do, were it not that I fear you might misconstrue my silence. Is it so desired that I shall shift the ground upon which I have been elected? I cannot do it. You need only to acquaint yourself with that ground, and press it on the attention of the South. It is all in print and easy of access. May I be pardoned if I ask whether even you have ever attempted to procure the reading of the Republican platform, or my speeches, by the Southern people? If not, what reason have I to expect that any additional production of mine would meet a better fate? It would make me appear as if I repented for the crime of having been elected and was anxious to apologize and beg forgiveness. To so represent me would be the principal use made of any letter I might now thrust upon the public. My old record cannot be so used; and that is precisely the reason that some new declaration is so much sought."

"Now, my dear sir, be assured I am not questioning your candor; I am only pointing out that while a new letter would hurt the cause which I think a

just one, you can quite as well effect every patriotic object with the old record. Carefully read pages 18, 19, 74, 75, 88, 89, and 267 of the volume of Joint Debates between Senator Douglas and myself, with the Republican Platform adopted at Chicago, and all your questions will be substantially answered. I have no thought of recommending the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, nor the slave trade among the slave States, even on the condition indicated; and if I were to make such recommendation, it is quite clear Congress would not follow it.

"As to employing slaves in arsenals and dock-yards, it is a thing I never thought of in my life, to my recollection, till I saw your letter; and I may say of it precisely as I have said of the two points above.

"As to the use of patronage in the slave States, where there are few or no Republicans, I do not expect to inquire for the politics of the appointee, or whether he does or not own slaves. I intend in that matter to accomodate the people in the several localities, if they themselves will allow me to accommodate them. In one word, I never have been, am not now, and probably never shall be in a mood of harassing the people either North or South.

"On the Territorial question I am inflexible, as you see my position in the book. On that there is a difference between you and us; and it is the only substantial difference. You think slavery is right and ought to be extended; we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. For this neither has any just occasion to be angry with the other.

"As to the State laws, mentioned in your sixth question, I really know very little of them. I never have read one. If any of them are in conflict with the fugitive-slave clause, or any other part of the Constitution, I certainly shall be glad of their repeal; but I could hardly be justified, as a citizen of Illinois, or as President of the United States, to recommend the repeal of a statute of Vermont or South Carolina."

Lincoln approached inauguration day with supreme confidence that his words would allay all the fears of the South and that the seceded States, realizing that they had no just cause for grievance in his election to the Presidency, would

gradually resume their places in the Union. Here are the high lights in the inaugural address. They are the thoughts which were in his mind when he opposed the territorial compromise. As bearing on Lincoln's responsibility for the rejection of the Compromise they are of great historical importance. Did the South want only the recognition of its constitutional rights? He was ready to concede and enforce every one of them. He spoke, not fair words to lull the South into a sense of security, but from the deep conviction of its rights.

"Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that 'I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.' Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And, more than this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:-

'RESOLVED, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend, and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.'

" I now reiterate these sentiments; and, in doing so, I only press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible, that the property, peace, and security of no section are to be in any wise endangered by the incoming administration. I add, too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given, will be cheerfully given to all the States when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause--as cheerfully to one section as to another."

But his words were not read and pondered by the seceded States. They had apparently no effect whatsoever. There was not the slightest indication of any wavering on the part of any of the states which had attempted to take themselves out of the Union. Even Alexander H. Stevens, ardent Unionist, came to the support of his State. It is hard to imagine Lincoln's feelings when the only answer was an attempt on the part of the Confederacy to negotiate

a treaty of peace and alliance with the United States?

Why did Lincoln so mistake the sentiment of the South?

In the first place he was so sure of his own rectitude and of his sympathy for the South that he could not conceive of any State withdrawing from the Union merely because of a difference of opinion on the extension of slavery into the territories of the United States--a question which at this time was of no urgency. Under the dictum of the Supreme Court the territories were open to slavery, a rather barren right as was shown by the admission of Kansas as a free state by the will of the people. Could the determination of Lincoln to secure a reversal of this opinion by the Court be sufficient cause for secession and perhaps for war? Lincoln could not believe it, and in truth if this had been the only issue, there would have been no secession.

What Lincoln did not realize was that the South regarded him as the embodiment of abolition sentiment. A very small minority, which was terribly in earnest, appeared to be the voice of the North, the voice of the Republican party and the voice of Lincoln--and the South paid no attention to his words, even the few in that section who may have read them.

But there was a more fundamental reason why he failed to appreciate the full seriousness of the crisis. He was familiar with the sentiment of people in the border slave states, especially Kentucky. He knew that the sentiment for Union was overwhelmingly strong in these states and that the people recognized the material and moral menace of slavery, and were ready for emancipation, gradual and with just compensation to the owners. These were precisely his sentiments.

But he failed to recognize the hold which slavery had taken upon the cotton states, which believed that emancipation would disrupt their entire social and industrial life, bringing in its train inconceivable disaster to the slave and slaveholder alike.

And both the border states and cotton states alike resented the interference with their domestic affairs by the Northern abolitionists. They had constitutional rights, of which these moral enthusiasts would deprive them. Under the Constitution they had the right to the return of their runaway slaves. Instead of securing them in this right the people of the North were leagued together to facilitate their escape and by their so-called personal liberty laws made it a criminal offense for a man to assist in the execution of the fugitive slave law. They deeply resented the charges of moral obliquity by those whose ancestors had grown rich in selling them the slaves. They were always in terror that the incendiary efforts might bring on the horrors of a servile insurrection. The North had fastened a protective tariff upon the South, compelling them to pay higher prices for everything they bought, all for the profit of the Northern manufacturers, and now were trying to take away from them their principal property. It was high time for independence, time to shake off intermeddlers and to resume their position as independent States. Secession was a constitutional right, first asserted by New England. Now they would exercise this right, and get away from those who were invading it. If in 1775 Massachusetts led the way to independence, merely because England levied trivial taxes without its consent, so

surely in 1860 the South had the revolutionary, as well as the constitutional, right to live its own life in its own way.

This overwhelmingly ardent desire for freedom and independence was what Lincoln failed to recognize, and failing to recognize it, he believed that the South would be content if assured of its constitutional rights, which he was ready to grant it.

Therefore, assured of these rights, as the South would be when it read his inaugural address, every seceding state would come back into fold. Lincoln therefore could see no reason for yielding on the territorial question, and no reason why a great moral issue should be yielded, when the Union could be maintained without such yielding. His failure to understand and appreciate the intense love of independence of the Southern people was the reason why his influence was thrown against the Crittenden Compromise. So the stage was set for War--a war for which he may be held accountable, but which was not willed by him.

In his inaugural he had stated firmly that the United States would repossess itself of the properties of the Government which the states had seized. Weeks went on and he made no attempt to do so. He was accused of weakness and vacillation. But he still felt that the seceded states would repent. He, too, must have realized, as we now do, that, if he brought on war by taking possession of these properties, he would not have had the whole hearted support of the people of the North.

Then came mighty reverberations of thunder, followed by clearing skies. The South committed its colossal blunder by firing upon Fort Sumter. Even if we accept the views of the South that the

States had the constitutional right to secede, and that South Carolina by exercising that right could sever its connection with the Union, yet the firing upon the flag of a sovereign country was an act of war, and Lincoln, true to his oath of office, accepted the challenge, and the war for the preservation of the Union was on.

There are few, if any, instances in history where a hesitant and discordant people were so instantly and patriotically galvanized into avenging an insult to their country's flag.

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